

APPROVED 02/07/2008

Present: Charles Kimball Chair, Pat Martel, Peter Bearse, Mike Nygren, Doug McElroy, Donald Gates, Jr., Public Keith Stanton who videotaped the meeting, and Recording Secretary Kathy Arsenault

Charles Kimball Chair called to the meeting to order at 6: 13 pm.

The meeting minutes of January 5, 2008 were reviewed. Motion to accept the meeting minutes of January 5, 2008 was made by Martel. Gates seconded the motion. Majority voted in the affirmative with Bearse abstaining.

The meeting minutes of January 9, 2008 were reviewed. Motion to accept the meeting minutes of January 9, 2008 was made by McElroy. Gates seconded the motion. Majority voted in the affirmative with Gates abstaining.

The meeting minutes of January 16, 2008 were reviewed. Motion to accept the meeting minutes of January 16, 2008 was made by McElroy. Gates seconded the motion. Majority voted in the affirmative with Gates abstaining.

Motion was made by McElroy to table the minutes of January 23, 2008. Gates seconded the motion. Majority voted in the affirmative.

The School District Budget discussion began on Page 52.

2150 Speech - Audiology

Bearse asked what the percentage increase was in the salary line. Martel stated that it is 5%. Kimball noted that most of it is salaried. Martel also noted that there is a position open. There is a \$1.00 line item there. Nygren stated that they are spending more than is anticipated for contracted services. Nygren stated that if you take the 2 teachers from last year, they were at about \$97,000. There is \$27,000 in salary line that he doesn't believe was the 3rd teacher/position. Martel did some calculating of the numbers and determined that that they had 1 speech pathologist. Bearse asked if they budgeted for 2, yet they have gotten by with 1, why do they need 3? McElroy read aloud from the January 5, 2008 meeting minutes, which spoke regarding this item. Nygren stated that there is about a \$40,000 difference in the budgets and the requests. Bearse asked again, why do they need 3 when they have been getting by with 1. Nygren stated that it does cost them more to contract out. He continued that we have hit on it and identified it this year, to be sure that next year it will be broken down line by line as to where they actually spent the money. They have over-budgeted for this past year. Nygren stated that the Special Education services request has a built in 10% for a "just-in-case". McElroy agreed but added that things could change. Nygren suggested going with the base salary that they would have budgeted for last year. Bearse suggested approving of 2 positions.

Bearse made motion to approve \$85,151 for 2 positions. Line 5112-10 (Reference Page 94) McElroy seconded the motion. Majority voted in the affirmative.

Kohlhofer entered the meeting at 6:58 pm.

Martel recalculated without the FICA. The new bottom line is \$99, 215.05.

Pinkham entered the meeting at 7:00 pm.

Bearse motion made a motion to recommend the new bottom line of \$99,215.05 Kohlhofer seconded the motion. Majority voted in the affirmative.

2162 – Physical Therapy

Page 55

Kohlhofer asked what is the need for physical therapy. Pinkham stated that there is physical therapy for children in the school that is a part of their IEP. She continued that it goes beyond occupational therapy needs. We do have seriously ill children in the district and it does affect their education. Kohlhofer stated that this is very expensive and as part of the IEP we are paying for it. Bearse asked how often do they come into the school. Pinkham stated it isn't only at the school, this goes to the home as well. Kohlhofer questioned, don't they have the insurance. Martel asked if a child is placed in an alternative placement for the IEP, would we pay for it or would the alternative placement pay for it. Pinkham replied that we pay for it, we are responsible for it, however we do not pay for services that we are not held accountable for.

Nygren noted that last year out of district cost was approximately \$14,000 for physical therapy. Pinkham stated yes, and costs are going up. Pinkham continued that she could not justify the numbers down to the penny, but she would gladly bring the people in that could. She added that she doesn't feel we give enough time to this particular budget. Bearse asked is some of these expenses are covered by the health insurance. Pinkham replied that anything you see here are expenses we are responsible for. Bearse asked what are we actually budgeting for gross or net. Pinkham replied for what we had paid out. She added that when you keep cutting into the only thing you have leverage in, you are taking away services. It is shuffling the coins around. Bearse asked again if we are budgeting a gross estimate or net. Pinkham replied that we are only budgeting for that which we are going to be held accountable for. Kohlhofer questioned are we turning the school into hospitals? Pinkham replied that it is about the children that need these services. Kohlhofer stated that he believes that schools should not be doing occupational or physically therapy. Bearse stated that the schools have been saddled with additional services, but where are we going to draw the line. Kohlhofer said that if the State is mandating this, the State should be providing the services.

Bearse asked if we get money back for these services where would that appear. Pinkham replied in revenues, but reminded that with these cuts, don't expect anything back next year.

After some continued discussion, McElroy made motion to recommend the \$15,200. Pinkham seconded the motion. Majority voted in the affirmative.

2163 – Occupational Therapy

(Page 57)

Pinkham started by saying that she would ask (for next year) to have a caption under each heading for an explanation of services and/or job descriptions. Pinkham asked if that would help to explain what a person/position does. Bearse stated yes, that would help.

Kohlhofer noted that these services are contracted.

After a brief discussion, McElroy made motion to recommend the \$114,825.47. Gates seconded the motion. Majority voted in the affirmative.

Bearse stated that we have no understanding of the workloads are for these positions and can you answer that? Pinkham replied no, but if you want more information than what I have, I would have someone come in and speak to this.

Discussion began about last weeks' meeting and the discussion that had taken place about the Gifted & Talented Program.

2169 – Vision

These are contracted services.

After a brief discussion, McElroy made a motion to recommend the \$600. Gates second the motion. Majority voted in the affirmative.

2210 – Curriculum

Kimball asked is this part of the summer program. McElroy replied yes, it is included here. Bearse asked is this a teacher development program, which would allow for step increases. He continued that if that is yes, the teacher should participate in paying for the classes. Pinkham replied yes, up to a certain amount, however what is in the budget is not what the teachers are responsible for, it is what is in their contract. Martel noted the course reimbursement is \$475 per, yet the request is for \$25,000. Pinkham stated that it is contractual and they do benefit from it, our children benefit from it as well. Kohlhofer asked if the course pertains to their job or is it any course they wish to take. Pinkham replied no it is work related, and they have to be course specific.

Bearse asked approximately what portion of the total cost is covered by the teacher's out-of-pocket expense. Pinkham said she couldn't tell until they have exceeded what is contractual. Kimball added that they (the teachers) are paying the full fare right from the start. They have to complete and pass the course and then file for reimbursement.

Nygren spoke about questions that were asked at a previous Budget Committee meeting regarding the Tuft's consultant. He stated that when he asked if the teachers were certified, the answer was yes. So his question is, if that is the case, why are we hiring a consultant? Pinkham replied to help improve them and for those that want to improve themselves. She suggested the Budget Committee read the State guidelines. She also added that she would like to bring the Administration back in to speak to this. Nygren stated that you would not bring them in

(consultants) unless you were failing or not reaching your goals. He asked do they need this on a yearly basis or for the next 5 or 6 years. He continued that we need to evaluate this if we don't see the scores improve dramatically over the next year. Pinkham stated that she encourages all to read the State guidelines as to the expectations, how they are changing and raising the bar so high, yet the resources are going lower and lower.

Nygren stated that he would like to see this year's result. He added that we don't know where they have spent their money, and they are 4 years behind on the budget formula. Pinkham added that the State is about 3 years behind. Nygren stated that he would make note for next year to have these results. Pinkham noted that it takes time to gain that data. Nygren said I don't know how much they have raised the bar, but 78% of the kids were not proficient in writing with the No Child Left Behind, so we keep adding specialists to help get us there.

Bearse asked if the staff development coordinator is needed. Nygren replied that is contractual. McElroy read aloud from the January 5, 2008 minutes, which spoke to this item. Kohlhofer asked why couldn't we remove this position. Nygren stated because it is contractual.

Martel made a motion to recommend the \$57,680. McElroy seconded the motion. Majority voted in the affirmative.

2220- Library Media

(Page 63/64)

Discussion regarding the library computers and bar coders began.

After a brief discussion, McElroy made a motion to recommend the \$48,639.99. Nygren seconded the motion. Majority voted in the affirmative.

2225- Computer Technology

Discussion about new technology and offering systems to and in public buildings began.

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McElroy referred to the teacher's laptops and questioned about we are going to do something about it or worry about it next year. Kohlhofer stated that if the money for the Para-professionals gets approved, we are not going to have money for everything. He continued that if teachers would rather go without laptops, yet have a great insurance program, let them.

Martel made a motion to recommend the \$81,561.95. Bearse seconded the motion. Majority voted in the affirmative.

2310 – School Board

Bearse asked why the legal expenses are up. Pinkham replied that the teacher contracts are up and she would highly recommend leaving that in the budget.

A brief discussion about the School Board newsletter and cooperative planning took place.

Bearse made a motion to recommend the \$61,915. Martel seconded the motion. Majority voted in the affirmative.

2320 – Office of the Superintendent

Kohlhofer began with the increases and stated it should be 2% across the board. He continued that where the Town was only at the 2%, that would only be fair. McElroy noted that it is his (the Superintendent's) discretion as to who gets what. Pinkham noted that anyone listed here is not Union. McElroy stated that this is 2% salary adjustment rather than 4.5%. Discussion regarding the salary lines continued.

Bearse suggested making a motion to cut the Superintendent's salary in ½. Pinkham stated that he is not on an hourly basis. He is salaried on a consulting basis. Kohlhofer asked didn't we used to have a Superintendent who handled 3 schools. Pinkham said we had 2 superintendents who carried 3 schools districts and we received 1/3 of the services that we are receiving now. Kohlhofer stated that one thing to look at for next year is to looking into not having a superintendent or having a principal/superintendent. Martel asked is it at 52 weeks a year. Pinkham replied that she believes that it is with 3 or 4 weeks vacation per year. There is coverage when he is not there.

Bearse asked about the ratio of administration overhead to those that are directly involved in teaching. Pinkham replied that she would not answer that. She continued that although it is a very worthy question, she would like the Budget Committee to make the time to have the right people come in and get the answers for them. Pinkham stated that there is a Judiciary process where everybody is open to a fair trial. We need to come in and be open- minded and take the time to make valid decisions. She continued that when people who run for these positions don't take the time to listen to the answers, we have to ask ourselves, are we really representing the people in this community. Pinkham continued stating that you are making judgments without having all the answers.

Kohlhofer replied that he ran for this position with a blank slate, adding that he has some prejudices and biases that he has been open about. He said that doesn't mean that he is not open-minded. Things that he disagrees with, he is not going to vote for. He stated that he hopes that next year we can do this differently and have more time for doing this. McElroy stated that we should have gone though the whole budget on the first Saturday, and then came back the next Saturday. Unfortunately some of the administration had to leave by 12:30. It would be easier to do a complete run through the first Saturday, allowing time for questions and answers on the following Saturday.

Pinkham asked if the Committee was going to keep challenging the cuts that the School Board has already made. It is making it harder and harder to keep going. Pinkham will ask Annmarie to have the information for increases that are out of anybody's decision making. She continued that this takes away from services and regular education. You either accept it or we just keep cutting it out of regular education.

Kohlhofer added, but then we add in programs like the Gifted & Talented Program, we add in programs that we don't even have space for. Pinkham noted that we (The School Board) didn't vote it in either. Martel noted that we are not attacking anyone, but it would have been more helpful if we had YTD expenditures for the 08 request. She continued that we need to have the comparisons. Pinkham replied that yes, we asked her (Annmarie) and you just have to give her time. Martel stated that we asked her for it 3 meetings ago. Kohlhofer noted that information could easily be updated weekly. Pinkham agrees that we need to improve this process.

Bearse stated that it is a lack of data like in the Gifted & Talented Program that is part of the problem. He continued that as a for instance, the ratios of cost per student, we don't have evaluative data.

Bearse made motion to cut the Superintendent salary in ½. Gates seconded the motion. Majority voted in the negative. Motion defeated.

With the increases kept to 2% only, the new bottom line is \$249,829. Kohlhofer made a motion to recommend the \$249, 829. Nygren seconded the motion. Majority voted in the affirmative.

McElroy made a motion to recess. Bearse seconded the motion. The meeting was recessed at 8:45 pm

The meeting was returned to session at 8:52 pm.

2330 – Special Education Administration

Bearse asked why the decrease. Nygren said that some positions have been moved around to other departments. Pinkham reminded that some cuts that have been made, we agreed not to announce. She added that we have cut 3.5 positions from the budget and that we are asking our staff to do more with less. Pinkham stated that it is hard when you have already cut and now you are being asked to cut more. She understands that this is the job of the Budget Committee. Kohlhofer said yes, that is our job and unfortunately it sometimes is hard.

Bearse asked what is the basis for figuring the Coordinator/Staff travel. Pinkham replied that is travel reimbursement. Nygren added that they do most of their travel to Sanborn and Haverhill. Pinkham said yes, Sanborn, the SST, and Haverhill, Ma. Pinkham added that the federal reimbursement per mile is actually .5125, up from about .445.

McElroy made a motion to recommend the \$278,103.23. Gates seconded the motion. Majority voted in the affirmative.

2400 – School Administration

Nygren stated that the contract goes on the Warrant Article. Kohlhofer asked about the special phones. McElroy then read aloud from the January 5, 2008 meeting minutes that spoke to this. Discussion began regarding the current phone system and the Alert-now system. Kohlhofer

asked if the Town could access this system even though it belongs to the school. Pinkham stated that she wasn't sure, however it has never been asked.

Bearse questioned the amount for the maintenance agreement, as it seems high to him. McElroy stated that this is the actual number for the maintenance agreement.

Kohlhofer made a motion to recommend the \$287, 986.30. (Page 77) Gates seconded the motion. Majority voted in the affirmative.

2600 – Operation of Plant

(Page 80)

After a brief discussion, Pinkham made a motion to recommend the \$393,533.73. Gates seconded the motion. Majority voted in the affirmative

2700 – Transportation

(Page 81)

Pinkham noted that Special Education transportation could change overnight, however this number is based on all current projections.

Gates made a motion to recommend the \$515,615. McElroy seconded the motion. Majority voted in the affirmative.

2900 – Support Benefits

(Page 84) This is a re-cap.

A discussion about health insurance programs took place. Kimball reminded that Page 84 is just a summary of all of them put together.

5100 – Debt Services

After brief discussion, Kohlhofer made a motion to recommend the \$354,775. Gates seconded the motion. Majority voted in the affirmative.

2100- Food Service

After brief discussion, McElroy made a motion to recommend the \$149,256. Kohlhofer seconded the motion. Majority voted in the affirmative.

The Warrant Article

Gates asked are they Union. Pinkham replied yes, anyone listed here is Union. Discussion about the academic teaching staff, their insurance and benefits took place.

After brief discussion, McElroy made a motion to not recommend the warrant article regarding the teacher contracts. Kohlhofer seconded the motion. Majority voted in the affirmative to NOT recommend this article, with Pinkham abstaining.

Kimball began with the follow-up data for Town budgets provided by Heidi.

4140 - Election & Registration

McElroy made a motion to recommend the new election budget at \$11,715. Nygren seconded the motion. Majority voted in the affirmative.

Kimball reminded that it was previously voted on to recommend the salaries at the 2% with the FICA adjusted.

Article #10

After brief discussion McElroy made a motion to recommend Article #10. Gates seconded the motion. Majority voted in the affirmative.

Article #8

Discussion regarding Article #8 began. Nygren questioned the Deputy Town Clerk at \$13.00/hour. He stated that that needs to be more defined than that, as it was not approved to increase the hours of the position.

It was discussed that Article #8 needs to have a bottom line figure. McElroy noted that the Selectmen will have their number and the Budget Committee will have theirs. Discussion about the Articles and the verbiage continued. It was discussed to talk with Heidi as to whether or not the salaries could be taken out and only the increases be shown. Perhaps it could be that we leave the regular salary line, and then Article #8 could show only the increases as well as both the Selectmen and the Budget Committee recommendations. These will be discussed with Heidi to see what the options are.

Kohlhofer is working on the Report of the Budget Committee for the Town Report. Upon completion, it will be submitted to Heidi.

The next scheduled meeting of the Budget Committee is the Town Public Budget Hearing at 7:00 pm on Wednesday February 6, 2008.

Motion to adjourn was made by Martel. McElroy seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 10:05 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kathy Arsenault
Recording Secretary